R E P O R T R E S U M E S

ED 016 926 AC 002 007

REPORT ON RESEARCH PROJECT CONCERNING "FACULTY ATTITUDES TOWARD THE DIVISION OF CONTINUING EDUCATION AT THE UNIVERSITY OF OREGON," EUGENE. PAPER PRESENTED AT THE NATIONAL SEMINAR ON ADULT EDUCATION RESEARCH (CHICAGO, FEB 11-13, 1968).

BY- DAHLE, THOMAS L.
OREGON UNIV., EUGENE

PUB DATE 68

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.25 HC-$0.52 11P.

DESCRIPTORS- #COLLEGE FACULTY, #INDIVIDUAL CHARACTERISTICS, #PROGRAM ATTITUDES, #ADULT EDUCATION PROGRAMS, #STATE UNIVERSITIES, RESEARCH, UNIVERSITY EXTENSION, PROGRAM EVALUATION, UNIVERSITY OF OREGON,

A STUDY WAS UNDERTAKEN AT THE UNIVERSITY OF OREGON TO DETERMINE FACULTY ATTITUDES TOWARD THE DIVISION OF CONTINUING EDUCATION AND ITS ACTIVITIES, INCLUDING SUCH CONSIDERATIONS AS THE QUALITY OF INSTRUCTION IN THE DIVISION'S CREDIT COURSES, THE RIGOR OF GRADING, AND THE QUALITY OF THE STUDENT IT SERVES. FACULTY MEMBERS WERE ALSO QUERIED AS TO THEIR VIEW OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE DIVISION OF CONTINUING EDUCATION AND THE PRIMARY FUNCTION OF A UNIVERSITY, AND DATA WERE OBTAINED ON AGE, SEX, ACADEMIC DISCIPLINE, YEARS OF COLLEGE TEACHING, ACADEMIC RANK, AND MAJOR OCCUPATION (TEACHER, RESEARCHER, OR ADMINISTRATOR). USABLE QUESTIONNAIRES WERE RETURNED BY 130 RESPONDENTS. FAVORABLE ATTITUDES CORRELATED SIGNIFICANTLY WITH SEX (WOMEN), DISCIPLINE (PROFESSIONAL SCHOOLS), AGE (OLDER FACULTY), AND RANK (ASSOCIATE PROFESSORS), BUT NOT WITH THE OTHER VARIABLES. THERE WAS A SLIGHT TENDENCY, APPARENTLY ARISING FROM INSUFFICIENT INFORMATION, TO QUESTION THE QUALITY OF INSTRUCTION IN THE DIVISION OF CONTINUING EDUCATION. A NEED FOR FURTHER RESEARCH AND IMPROVED PUBLIC RELATIONS IS SEEN. (LY)

ED 016926

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS COPYRIGHTED MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY Thomas L. Dahle Dir. Continuing Educ. TO ERIC AND ORGANIZATIONS OPERATING UNDER AGREEMENTS WITH THE U.S. OFFICE OF EDUCATION. FURTHER REPRODUCTION OUTSIDE THE ERIC SYSTEM REQUIRES PERMISSION OF THE COPYRIGHT OWNER."

The attached is a paper presented at the 1968 National Seminar on Adult Education Research in Chicago, February 11, by Thomas L. Dahle, Head of Eugene Center for Continuing Education.

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL OFFICE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY.

OFFICE OF EDUCATION

REPORT ON RESEARCH PROJECT CONCERNING "Faculty Attitudes Toward the Division of Continuing Education at the University of Oregon" Eugene, Ore.

I. BACKGROUND

Oregon has a state system of higher education. It consists of seven institutions of higher education and a Division of Continuing Education. A chancellor's office, responsible to a state Board of Higher Education which is appointed by the Governor, provides what is primarily a coordinative service for the entire state system.

Adult education services are administered primarily through the Division of Continuing Education which theoretically serves all institutions, but is not an integral part of any of them.

Division of Continuing Education offices are located on each of the campuses, as well as in some outlying areas, and inevitably the campus based offices become more closely associated with the institution at which they are located.

However, as with extension and adult education activities generally, the relationships with the conventional academic programs are not always clearly defined or understood.

In the belief that adult education should have a research base, as well as a teaching and service base, the Division of Continuing Education has provided for the past several years, financial support for research assistantships to several of the state universities. Those research projects which have had implications for adult education have been developed cooperatively between the campus based Continuing Education office and the academic discipline of the research assistant.

The research project reported here was conducted by a master's degree candidate in the School of Journalism, Jeremiah J. O'Brien. It is reported because the

implications of the research have relevance for adult educator-faculty relationships regardless of administrative structure. Hopefully too, it may provide help in overcoming the deficiency noted by Lazarsfeld and Thielens who indicated "There are few occupational groups about which so little is known as college professors."[1]

The research study was undertaken in order to determine faculty attitudes toward the adult education agency represented on their campus and toward its activities. An attempt was made to discern the image of the Division of Continuing Education, the quality of instruction, the rigor of grading, and the quality of the students it serves. Faculty members were also queried as to their view of the relationship between the Division of Continuing Education and the primary functions of a university.

The total adult education program is typically broad at the University of Oregon, but in order to focus attention upon the most widely known phase, this research was directed toward a consideration of credit classes offered by the Division of Continuing Education.

2. HYPOTHESES

The following hypotheses were tested:

1. Those faculty members who are 35 years of age or younger will be more favorable toward adult education instruction than others.

2. Those faculty members who are at the rank of Assistant Professor will be more favorable toward adult education instruction than will those of higher rank.

---

[1]Paul F. Lazarsfeld and Wagner Thielens, Jr., The Academic Mind, The Free Press, 1958.

3. Those faculty members who have less than five years of college teaching experience will be more favorable toward adult education instruction than will those who have five years or more of college teaching experience.

4. Of four broad disciplinary areas, humanities, social science, sciences and Professional Schools, those faculty members who are in the Professional Schools will be more favorable toward adult education instruction than those from the other disciplines.

5. Those who believe teaching is a primary function of a university will be more favorable toward adult education instruction than will others.

3. DESIGN

A questionnaire was designed as the data gathering instrument. It was essentially a fixed-alternative questionnaire divided into two major sections with a cover letter appearing on page one.

The first section was designed to obtain demographic data such as age, sex and academic rank. One opinion question was contained in this section. The item requested respondents to rank what they considered to be the three most important functions of the university. Six alternatives plus an "other" category were provided.

The second section contained 22 attitude statements. There were 11 positive statements and 11 negative statements. The positive and negative statements were alternated in order to reduce response set. They give possible answers ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The ordering of possible answers was also alternated. Possible answers for positive statements were arranged so that strongly disagree was the first alternative, disagree was the second alternative and strongly agree was the fifth and last alternative. The order was reversed by the negative statements.

Scoring for each statement was developed so that responses were rated 1 for strongly unfavorable, 2 for unfavorable, 3 for neither agree nor disagree, 4 for favorable and 5 for strongly favorable.

The use of positive - negative statements and the scoring procedure are part of an attitude scale technique termed Summated Ratings, developed by Rensis Likert.[2]

In the questionnaire for this study five separate batteries of statements were constructed, resulting in five sets of summated ratings.

Battery I contains six statements about the quality of adult education instruction. The other four batteries contain four statements each. The statements are about (II) the degree to which adult education instruction helps to fulfill the primary functions of the university. (III) the rigor of grading, (IV) the quality of students and (V) the general value of adult education to higher education in Oregon.

The content of the batteries was developed through testing of the items with a group of graduate students and through interviews with a larger group of persons.

4. QUANTIFICATION

Sampling Procedure

For this study, the population sampled was limited to those persons with the academic rank of assistant professor, associate professor and professor. This limitation was made on the basis that many persons holding academic appointments as instructor are on campus for only the short time it takes to complete master of doctoral studies. While they may have opinions, the instructor -student might well respond more as a student than as a faculty member, and the objective of this study was to measure faculty attitudes.

A sample size of 220 was considered appropriate in order to allow for an adequate

---

[2]Allen Edwards, Techniques of Attitude Scale Construction, N.Y. Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1957.

sized response group of from 125-150 persons. A list of voting faculty members was obtained and each person was assigned a number. A table of random numbers was used to select the 220 faculty members.

The questionnaires were placed in campus mail envelopes and questionnaires were coded to enable identification of non-respondents. A follow-up letter was sent to non-respondents and at a later date personal visits were made to the offices of non-respondents.

A total of 182 questionnaires were returned and 130 of these were usable. Questionnaires were considered unusable for a number of reasons. The most frequently appearing reason was that the respondent "did not know anything about the Division of Continuing Education."

Of the 130 respondents 21.5% were from Humanities; 15.4% from Social Sciences; 13.1% from the Sciences; 50% from the Professional Schools. This is roughly proportioned to the entire faculty distribution.

Females are over-represented among the 130 respondents, approximately 13.1% of survey respondents being female and 8.4% of entire university faculty being female.

In academic rank the respondents again roughly approximated the all university faculty proportions, 36.2% being assistant professors; 25.2% associate professors; 38.6% Professors. Associate Professors are somewhat under represented in the sample group.

Scaling Procedure

The data from the second section of the questionnaire dealing with attitude statements were summed as previously described. The responses were then subjected to an item analysis to determine whether or not the items in the battery scaled in the Likert sense.

In this study, differences for all items were in the right direction. However, the difference between means for high and low groups on one item was so small as to not discriminate. Therefore, the item was dropped from Battery I making it a five-item battery.

Even though Batteries I through IV were intended to tap different dimensions of attitude, it was essential that all dimensions were parts of a general attitude. Consequently, the summated ratings of the four batteries were combined to see if they would scale.

When this was completed it was found they did scale and thus established that the scores on the four dimensions did have considerable common variance. If the common attribute was attitude then the 130 scores on the scale made of Batteries I through IV combined should correlate positively with the 130 scores on Battery V (General).

A Pearson Product - moment correlation was computed and the two sets of scores were found to be positively correlated with a coefficient of .54. This is high enough to indicate that the assessed four dimensions did collectively make a fairly good scale of general att'itudes. It is not claimed, however, that these are the only components of attitude.

In relating the independent variables in section one such as age, sex and academic rank to attitudes, Battery V (General) was used because it was constructed specifically to tap the broader attitudinal spectrum.

The T test for significance of difference between independent means was computed for each of the independent variables and battery V. In addition to the T Test, the Chi - square test of relationship was used for certain independent variables and the dependent variable.

While the scores on Battery V were used to provide an indication of general attitude, the scores on the first four batteries were used to determine as nearly as possible, the image of adult education instruction among faculty members in regard to each of the four specific areas of concern.

5. FINDINGS

Respondents were separated into four groups - unfavorable, neutral , moderately favorable and strongly favorable - for each of the five batteries which were I Instruction,

II Functions, III Grading, IV Students and V General.

Nearly 65% of 130 respondents indicated by the responses to Battery V that to some degree they were favorably disposed. In Battery II almost 64% were in the favorable groups.

In Battery IV 27.7% were in the favorable groups and 22.3% in the unfavorable group. In Battery III 11.6% were in the favorable groups and 37.7% in the unfavorable category. Only 1.5% were in the favorable groups in Battery III and 43.8% in the unfavorable groups.

This provided an overview of the perception of the faculty at the time tested. An analysis of the response item within each battery reveals that close to 1/2 of the sampled faculty members responded neutrally on most items. Several noteworthy exceptions were items in Battery II (Functions) where a denser number of neutral answers seemed to imply general agreement that adult education instruction was in keeping with the primary function of a university, and in Battery V (General) where almost 4/5 responded implying agreement that adult education instruction has a place in higher education in Oregon.

Discipline

In the matter of academic discipline areas the hypothesis that faculty from the Professional Schools would be more favorable was supported. Further examination of the data indicated that those sampled from the Science field tended to be least favorable, 55.4% from professional schools were in the high score group and 23.5% from Sciences were in the high score group.

Sex

Of the respondents the females tended to be more favorable than males. No prior hypothesis had been developed as to this, however.

Age

Results from statistical tests indicated that older faculty members were more favorable than the younger faculty members. This was contrary to the hypothesis. 25.9% of respondents 35 or younger were in the high group; 51.4% of respondents in the over 35 were in the high group.

Academic Rank

Assistant Professors tended to be more favorable than respondents at other academic ranks, as hypothesized, 56.5% being in the high score group while 38.3% of those at other ranks were in the high group.

This apparent discrepancy between findings as to age and academic rank seems to be accounted for by the finding that the favorable reaction as far as age was concerned was attributable to the older Assistant Professors.

Years of College Teaching

A statistical test indicated no significant differences between faculty members having more than 5 years of college teaching experience and those having less than 5 years experience.

Teachers - Researchers - Administrators

Although no hypothesis was developed for this independent variable, statistical testing indicated no significant differences on attitudes, even though administrators seemed to be somewhat more favorable.

Primary Function of University

There was a hypothesis that those who saw teaching as the primary function would be more favorable. The majority of respondents ranked teaching as the primary function comparing those who selected teaching to those whose selected others, statistical tests did not show a significant difference between the two groups.

6. IMPLICATIONS

Inasmuch as the relationships between the adult education agency (Division of Continuing Education) and the University of Oregon are typical of those of other similar educational institutions, the implications of this study may have a broader relevance for adult education generally.

In summary, the general image of adult education is good, but is certainly subject to improvement. There appears to be no real conflict between the role of adult education and the role of the university and as one respondent noted, adult education "is a fine com'munity service and relations device." One might speculate as to whether or not there is a growing realization of the linkage between adult education -academia- and the community and what this realization may portend for the future.

Results of the study seem to indicate a residual attitude of lack of rigor in grading in adult education courses. Further study to determine whether or not this attitude is borne out, in fact, is needed. Policy determinations based upon these findings could then be made.

Since there appears also to be an attitudinal trend towards questioning the quality of instruction, more information relative to this point needs to be obtained. In this re regard, an informal study conducted by this reporter while administering an adult education program at another institution seemed to provide pertinent evidence. Based upon that evidence, information was disseminated which fairly effectively demonstrated that instructors qualifications and instructional quality were at the least on a par with other academic programs.

As to the students enrolled in adult education classes, evidence indicated they are comparable to students enrolled in so called "regular classes". There seems to be no immense problem in this regard.

The evidence regarding relationships between attitudes and faculty characteristics seem to provide insights which may be of general application. There appears to be a correlation between amount of information and image. In general, the more information available and the resultant better understanding of the functions of adult education, the greater the acceptance by the faculty. Certainly an information program to "educate" the faculty as to purposes and goals of adult education seems warranted. If this informational program disseminates research materials bearing upon the attitudinal structure, its effectiveness would seem to be increased even more.

It is interesting to note that the least amount of acceptance seems to be in those academic areas where there is the least amount of interaction. The implications of this for the adult education administrator seem fairly apparent. Among considerations would be greater involvement through expanded offerings, consultation with opinion leader faculty members and increased conference or symposia activity cooperatively developed.

7. FURTHER RESEARCH

Implied in the preceding section have been suggestions for further research growing from observations concerning the evidence presented by this study, i.e. the linkage between academe and the community, studies in grading and instructional quality, and an informational program.

Further research studies might also probe more deeply into the reasons why certain disciplines are more or less favorable toward adult education. The psychological make-up of instructors might be scrutinized to determine their outlook. Information thus derived would perhaps be useful in ordering relationships, in program planning and in evaluation.

Attitudinal research projects might endeavor to increase the number of attitudinal components in order to expand the basic knowledge about the factors which influence

general attitude.

Some research activities might attempt to identify faculty opinion leaders and discover their attitudes. Other worthwhile research might well be done to determine attitudes and thus perhaps affect action, relative to problems which seem to plague adult education generally, such as salary structure, recognition, faculty recruitment, and fiscal support.

ERIC Clearinghouse
JAN 11 1968
on Adult Education